1	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS HOUSTON DIVISION		
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4	OBM, INC. 4:23-CV-01798		
5	VS. HOUSTON, TEXAS		
6	VS. HOUSTON, TEXAS		
7	LANCIUM LLC SEPTEMBER 14, 2023		
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9	TRANSCRIPT OF MOTION HEARING PROCEEDINGS		
10	HEARD BEFORE THE HONORABLE KEITH P. ELLISON UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE		
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12			
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PROCEEDINGS

THE COURT: Good afternoon and welcome. We're on the record in OBM versus Lancium. This is Keith Ellison.

We'll take appearances of counsel beginning with OBM, please.

MR. MILLER: Thank you, Your Honor. Good afternoon,
Your Honor. This is Rodney Miller of Womble Bond Dickinson on
behalf of OBM, and I also have on the line Preston Heard,
James Dority and Andrew Beverina.

THE COURT: Welcome to all of you.

For defendant?

MR. VALENZUELA: Good afternoon, Your Honor. This is
Daniel Valenzuela with Barnes & Thornburg and with me on the
line will be Craig Leavell and also Bruce Ratain from
Barnes & Thornburg as well.

THE COURT: Welcome to all of you, too.

Okay. We're here on defendant's motion to dismiss. You can assume I've read the papers.

Would you like to add to what's in the papers on your motion to dismiss?

MR. LEAVELL: Your Honor, on behalf of Lancium, we're happy to answer any questions. I'll briefly step through a couple of key points if you don't mind.

THE COURT: That's fine.

MR. LEAVELL: Great.

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Well, first of all, as it's clear and OBM doesn't dispute, it is OBM's burden to establish that there's declaratory judgment or subject matter jurisdiction for their complaint; and the standard, we agree, is set forth in the MedImmune case, which requires a substantial controversy of sufficient immediacy and reality to warrant the Court's involvement for a declaratory judgment. And that analysis has to be based on objective facts, not subjective fears by an unreasonable declaratory judgment.

And here, based on OBM's papers, if their fear was, in fact, genuine, it was entirely unreasonable under the entirety of the circumstances. There was no allegation of infringement of any particular patent, much less the patent at issue and there was absolutely no threat of litigation at all, much less an immediate or imminent threat of litigation.

There is one letter in which Lancium discussed its patents, but there are a lot of reasons for patent owners to be proud of their patents, to promote their patents; and if you're a small company like Lancium that's looking to secure lucrative collaborative arrangements with other small companies, patents are important. They're an indication that you're an innovative company and that you're worthy of collaborating with.

And the letter that Lancium sent on its face very clearly talks about the desire to continue the collaboration

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that the parties have been discussing for at least 18 months, if not two years at that point.

And the objective contemporaneous documents -and there's a lot of e-mails and a lot of text messages
submitted by both sides -- show honest interest in a
collaborative effort between the parties to make money and
there was money to be made, a lot more money than is going to
be made through a lawsuit and especially once lawyers' fees and
litigation is involved.

Simply put, Lancium was only interested in a collaborative agreement where the parties could make money and right up to the day -- two days before the lawsuit was filed and the week, the two weeks leading up to the lawsuit, which was filed by surprise, even OBM's CEO, Mr. Lawrence admits in his declaration that he was agreeing to meetings, he was promising to get back and to have deliverables such as nondisclosure agreements to continue the business discussions and he was encouraging Lancium to continue to explore a business relationship. And those communications were taking place right up to two days before the lawsuit was filed.

And there's case law we cite in our brief, the Communications Test Design case, and there are others, that make it very clear that you can't pretend to be continuing business discussions. You can't be promising to meet to further those discussions and promising to deliver further

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information in furtherance of that collaboration and then file a DJ complaint and pull the rug out from under those discussions.

There are cases that -- where the declaratory judgment plaintiff argued and the court found that those discussions were futile and there was no further need for any discussions. But the cases are clear and the cases cited by OBM are in the context of ongoing licensing or settlement discussions.

It's true that if two parties are talking about infringement with clear allegations of infringement and they've been negotiating over a license agreement for months or weeks or a settlement terms for that patent infringement allegation, then, yes, of course at some point if those discussions become futile, then either party is entitled to run in to court and seek the Court's assistance; however, that's not what was going on here.

The parties' own documents show they were not talking about license agreements or settlement agreements.

Those were never discussed. They were talking about a business proposal. And those business discussions were not futile, they were ongoing the week before the lawsuit was filed. The parties were talking about their weekends and what they did.

They were talking about excitement over the opportunity. And even Lancium's or OBM's own CEO says that the type of

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arrangement that was being discussed would not cause him any indigestion.

Those are the contemporaneous objective facts that are shown by the documents themselves that have been put into the record. And even the declarations by Mr. Lawrence admit that he was in discussions and was encouraging further discussions right up to the days before the lawsuit was filed.

THE COURT: Okay. Thank you very much.

Let me hear from the other side.

MR. MILLER: Good afternoon again, Your Honor. Rodney Miller here on behalf of OBM.

As stated in OBM's declaratory judgment action and also reiterated multiple times in our briefing, Lancium is, to us, mischaracterizing the business -- alleged business -- ongoing business discussions that they're alleging took place between the parties. And based on -- I'm going through the -- based on the objective factors that I'm going to discuss and the totality of circumstances, it is truly our position that we are at a crossroads and we need some type of resolution from the Court in order for our client to safely move forward with --

THE COURT: What points have you not reached resolution or reached some kind of comfort?

MR. MILLER: So in November -- that's one of the issues that we have going on. November the 12th, Mr. Lawrence, he

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provided a declaration and he's adamant that Lancium -- during the discussions, Lancium stated that his customers could be infringing the Lancium patents. And that was the true start of what -- the back-and-forth between the two parties.

And after that -- after that conversation,

Mr. Lawrence immediately called his counsel, he called his
attorneys. He called us over at Womble. And after that,

Mr. Lawrence, as discussed in his declaration, was having
conversations with Lancium. But in those conversations, he was
basically trying to prevent what we have going on right now.

And what happened? After Lancium -- Lancium reached out to him multiple times and for two or three different occasions, Mr. Lawrence did not respond and on April the 3rd, he then receives a letter -- a letter not from a lawyer who wants to discuss business terms, not from some corporate attorney, he receives a letter from litigation counsel -- IP litigation counsel.

And in that letter, they identify the Foreman software, my client's product; they say that that product could relate to Lancium's patents; and then they include in an attachment the patent.

And in our briefing on top of -- due to prior conversations, in our briefing we just wanted to point the judge back to *Hewlett-Packard versus Acceleron*.

What's very interesting in that letter -- the

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attorneys were really great at drafting the letter and not using certain magic words or specifically stating, hey, you infringed, but they do present -- again, present the patent; they compare the patent to the product.

And what happens next? My client is worried, as stated in his declaration, he doesn't know what's going to happen next. So what does he do? He reaches out to Lancium. Per the instructions in the letter, he reaches out to Lancium to try to discuss some type of business deal. And in those discussions, Lancium proposed terms and in those terms that they proposed were from him -- they were unreasonable terms because those terms would have prevented him from practicing in the field that he wanted to practice in.

And that's where we are, Your Honor. We have -Lancium, they do a really good job of discussing or talking
about the small communications or the fact that my client tries
to be friendly and tries to be respectful, they somehow use
that as a way of ignoring the severity of what's going on,
ignoring the fact that their client has a history of suing
other companies as it relates to this patent; ignoring the fact
that they did, in fact, tell my client that his customers who
were using Foreman could be infringing; the fact that based
even on their briefing, that they have this belief that their
patent somehow covers this broad range of ERCOT Demand Response
CLR function standards that have been going on in Texas for a

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number of years. And they somehow, even through conversations with my client, they've had a history of trying to corner that market. So --

THE COURT: Let's go through your individual allegations.

You made the point that Lancium has filed two infringement lawsuits against software companies, but hadn't it been made clear in the cases that -- that prior lawsuits is not generally one of the more telling indicia of a need for declaratory judgment suit? I think I have one case I'm familiar with where I held that.

MR. MILLER: Your Honor -- I'm sorry.

THE COURT: Other declaratory judgments have had extensive history of patent litigation with their adversaries and here we're only talking about two lawsuits in three years, right?

MR. MILLER: That's correct, Your Honor. But I say from that, I look at the totality of the circumstances. I look at, as stated in our declaratory judgment action, these are -- the back-and-forth has been going on for quite some time.

So it is not just the -- we're not looking at the litigation history of Lancium by itself. We're looking at the litigation history of Lancium, in addition to the letter that was provided to him from litigation counsel, in addition to the threat of his customers somehow potentially infringing the

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Lancium patents that were stated in the meeting in November.

THE COURT: And *Innovative Therapies* case, the Federal Circuit said, quote, "Prior litigation is a circumstance to be considered in assessing the totality of the circumstances," end quote.

Infringement suits against other parties do not establish declaratory judgment jurisdiction unless there's some additional suit, threatening act, directed towards the declaratory judgment plaintiff.

I just don't think 2020 and 2020 suits are sufficient.

And there's a statement that Foreman could be infringing. The Federal Circuit in the same case said that informal conversations where a patentee has not seen and evaluated plaintiff's product for infringement do not constitute a threat.

I think if we bring each one of these down, they're all, I think, insufficient. The totality might be sufficient, but Lancium's letter to OBM identified the patent in OBM's product line. It doesn't really -- it didn't impose a response deadline or included detailed infringement analysis or use more aggressive language than that, did it?

MR. MILLER: The letter -- I point you, again,

Your Honor, to the *HP versus Acceleron* case. The letter was

drafted in a way where the letter asked the client to ask our

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client -- if they said, hey, I understand my client -- quote,
"I understand my client has attempted to reach out to you
numerous times to discuss your software, but you have not
responded," end quote.

And the letter asked for my client to reach out to Mr. Rock. And when my client reached out to Mr. Rock,

Lancium -- they delayed discussions afterwards.

And after a month -- after a month of delay and during that time Mr. Lawrence, my client, again, asked for them to provide terms, they delayed more and then we ended up having -- Womble -- we ended up having to send a letter on our own a month later that stated that we did not infringe -- our client did not infringe.

The next day or a few days thereafter, Lancium did have another meeting with my client. And during that meeting, they stated that again they didn't want -- they didn't want to have to -- I'm trying to get the exact quote from here -- but they were trying to avoid litigation for both parties.

THE COURT: Lancium has been quiet for a while.

Anything you want to add? Lancium, is there anything you would like to add?

MR. LEAVELL: Yes. Thank you, Your Honor. Just very briefly, the *HP* case that they rely on heavily, the patent owner in that case was a nonpracticing entity -- an entity who

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solely existed for suing for patent infringement, had no other business and that's all they did.

And their letter that they sent in the *HP* case demanded a response in two weeks and had a very detailed analysis of how the infringement occurred.

That's a very different letter. That's very different circumstances than the situation here where Lancium is not a patent troll, they're not a nonpracticing entity, they're not in the business of suing people. They're in the business of controlling data centers.

You're correct that the two prior suits -- two suits in three years is not a lot; but if you look even deeper, they're very different defendants, very different situations, where there were numerous letters that Lancium sent with detailed allegations that express an explicit allegation of infringement and those letters were ignored for months before Lancium had no choice but to sue those defendants.

Here, Lancium sent a letter without any threat, without any allegation, with no analysis of infringement, no deadline for a response, and an express invitation to continue the collaboration discussions.

A month later -- it took OBM one month to respond to that letter and say they had no intention of infringing our patent. That was their formal position. And then they sued two weeks later. It took them a month to respond to our

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letter. They sent a letter, and then two weeks later filed their lawsuit.

And without ever even -- all this concern, all this fear -- I don't mean to be -- I don't mean to joke, Your Honor; and this isn't really a joke, but it makes me think of, you know, a couple that's just not communicating.

about litigation threats, they could have said something and Lancium could have explained exactly what they're thinking which is no, no, no. We want to collaborate. Look at this opportunity. They never mentioned this to Lancium and to allow them to run to Court and drag Lancium into court against its will to spend perhaps millions of dollars to litigate a patent, that Lancium had no intention of enforcing or filing a lawsuit at this time is just -- because OBM couldn't speak up and say, hey, what is this? What do you mean? Is there an issue? Are we going to partner, or are you going to sue us?

That's all they had to do is open a dialogue, and they didn't. It's a lack of communication, it's unreasonable, and there's nothing that Lancium did under the totality of the circumstances, under the controlling law can support the jurisdiction.

And then finally I'll just mention that there is a discretionary element. I don't think it's a close case, Your Honor; but if it is a close case, then the Court should

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exercise its discretion because what the Court needs to incentivize parties in this situation to do is to communicate and work out these issues, not run to court. It's clear from Lancium's point of view -- and what looks like to Lancium is OBM is on a mission to promote itself as some sort of anti-patent savior and they've got funding behind them.

They've got petroleum companies that are paying for them to challenge patents and Lancium patents and they want to position themselves in the industry as some sort of white hat savior against patents.

Well, patents are important and they go back to the constitution. And the balance that the constitution and the patent laws strike is that the monopoly granted by patents is to strike a balance to encourage that innovation and to encourage research and development. That's what Lancium has done and this sort of trickery with the ongoing promises, the discussions and promises of meetings only to file suit and pull that under the rug is not something that should be encouraged by the courts.

THE COURT: Lancium says, "We're both trying to avoid litigation." That doesn't seem threatening.

You both make good arguments and I can tell you're both very experienced in the field, but I'm afraid I just don't see the predicate here for federal jurisdiction.

And it does seem like y'all have the potential to

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1 resolve whatever your differences are. With lawyers as skilled 2 as you guys and I'm sure possessed of substantial drafting 3 experience, I think you could work it out; but I'm going to 4 have to grant the motion to dismiss. Thank you all very much. 5 03:53PM (The proceedings were adjourned.) 6 7 8 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE I, Lanie M. Smith, CSR, RMR, CRR, Official 9 Court Reporter, United States District Court, Southern District of Texas, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and 10 correct transcript, to the best of my ability and understanding, from the record of the proceedings in the 11 above-entitled and numbered matter. 12 13 /s/ Lanie M. Smith Official Court Reporter 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

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